



CONSORTIUM
for
CITIZENS
with
DISABILITIES

March 26, 2003

Dear Senator:

The Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) strongly opposes any cuts to the Medicaid program as part of the fiscal year 2004 budget resolution.

Medicaid serves nearly 11 million people with disabilities, of whom 7 million are under age 65. The program is the primary public source of funding for long-term services and supports for people with disabilities of all ages. It is the largest funder of state and local spending for disability services in the country.

The estimated \$92 billion in Medicaid cuts in the House Budget Resolution will deeply impact people with disabilities. Coupled with the Medicaid budget deficits all states are currently facing, the impact on children and adults with disabilities and their families will be devastating.

States will have no choice but to cut services that are literally a lifeline for people with disabilities and their families:

- For people with epilepsy, mental illness, HIV, and a variety of other conditions, Medicaid is very often the only source of access to essential prescription drug coverage.
- For people with a variety of physical disabilities, such as spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, cerebral palsy, or amputations, Medicaid usually is the only way they can get access to durable medical equipment like wheelchairs or prosthetic devices, as well as assistive technology.
- For many people with physical, mental, cognitive, and sensory disabilities, Medicaid generally is the only source of funds for them to live and work in the community with friends and families and avoid more costly and segregated nursing homes or institutions.
- For children with all types of disabilities, the services provided by Medicaid's Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit often enables them to avoid additional disabilities; continue to live at home with their families; make it through school; and become independent productive members of society.

- For school-age children with special education needs, Medicaid is a major source of related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that enables children to receive the education they need to reach their full potential.

Deep Medicaid cuts are shortsighted. Medicaid services allow families to care for children at home and enable adults with disabilities to live independently in the community. Cuts in these critical services will result in costly institutionalization.

People with disabilities are the poorest minority in this country. Many depend on Supplemental Security Income (SSI), veterans' benefits, food stamps, TANF and other critical programs for basic benefits. The House Budget Resolution's cuts to these programs will adversely impact people with disabilities.

On behalf of children and adults with disabilities and their families, we urge you to inform Senate conferees that you strongly oppose cuts to Medicaid in the final Budget Resolution. Further, we ask that you oppose the final budget resolution if it contains cuts in Medicaid funding.

The CCD is a working coalition of organizations working together to advocate for national public policy that ensures the self determination, independence, participation, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society.

On Behalf Of:

Academy of Academic Physiatrists
Adapted Physical Activity Council
Advancing Independence: Modernizing Medicare and Medicaid
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
American Council of the Blind
American Foundation for the Blind
American Association on Health and Disability
American Association on Mental Retardation
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Congress of Community Supports and Employment Services
American Medical Rehabilitation Providers Association
American Music Therapy Association
American Network of Community Options and Resources
American Occupational Therapy Association
American Psychological Association
Association for Persons in Supported Employment
Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Bazon Center for Mental Health Law
Brain Injury Association of America
Center on Disability and Health
Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf
Consortium of Developmental Disabilities Councils
Council for Exceptional Children
Disability Service Providers of America
Easter Seals
Epilepsy Foundation
Family Voices
Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
Helen Keller National Center
International Association of Psychosocial Rehabilitation Services
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
National Association for the Advancement of Orthotics and Prosthetics
National Association of County Behavioral Health Directors
National Association of Developmental Disabilities Councils
National Association of Mental Health Planning and Advisory Councils
National Association of Protection and Advocacy Systems
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Social Workers
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Coalition on Deaf-Blindness
National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare
National Down Syndrome Congress
National Mental Health Association
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Organization of Social Security Claimants' Representatives
National Organization on Disability
NISH
Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America
Research Institute for Independent Living
Spina Bifida Association of America
The Arc of the United States
Title II Community AIDS National Network
United Cerebral Palsy

For more information, contact:

Liz Savage (savage@thearc.org) or Marty Ford (ford@thearc.org) at The Arc and UCP Public Policy Collaboration, (202) 783-2229